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# OPEN SIGHTS





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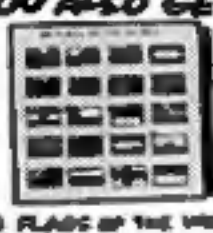
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# *OPEN SIGHTS*

Fleetway Publications Ltd., 1962



SAND, OIL FUMES, THE ACRID STENCH OF CORDITE, THE SOUND OF THEIR OWN GUNS BATTERING ON THEIR EARDRUMS... FOR THE TANKMEN FIGHTING IN NORTH AFRICA, THESE WERE AMONG THE MAJOR DISCOMFORTS... THESE AND THE LASH OF ENEMY STEEL!

# Chapter 1. *Unequal Combat*

IN THE SUMMER OF 1942, THE DRAGOON REGIMENT TO WHICH SERGEANT DAN MASON BELONGED WAS NEW TO THOSE DISCOMFORTS.

HECK!  
WE'VE RUN SLAP  
INTO A LOAD OF  
TROUBLE! IF THE  
C.O. HAS ANY SENSE  
HE'LL ORDER AN  
ABOUT-TURN!



BUT SUCH AN ORDER WAS FAR FROM THE MIND OF THE REGIMENT'S COMMANDING OFFICER AT THAT MOMENT...

SUNRAY TO ALL  
SQUADRONS... WEAVE  
YOUR WAY FORWARD AND  
ENGAGE THE  
ENEMY!





## Open Sights

DAN MASON COULD HARDLY BELIEVE HE HAD HEARD CORRECTLY.

ENGAGE THE ENEMY?  
THE OLD MAN MUST BE  
OFF HIS ROCKER!



THE ENEMY MADE AN IMPRESSIVE AND FORMIDABLE SPECTACLE. IN NUMBERS THE OPPOSING FORCES WERE ABOUT EQUAL, BUT IN FIRE-POWER THERE WAS NO COMPARISON. . .

THE ENGLANDERS ARE  
ASKING TO BE  
ANNIHILATED, HERR  
HAUPTMANN. WHAT HARM  
CAN THEY DO US WITH THEIR  
THIRTY-SEVEN MILLIMETRE  
POPGUNS?



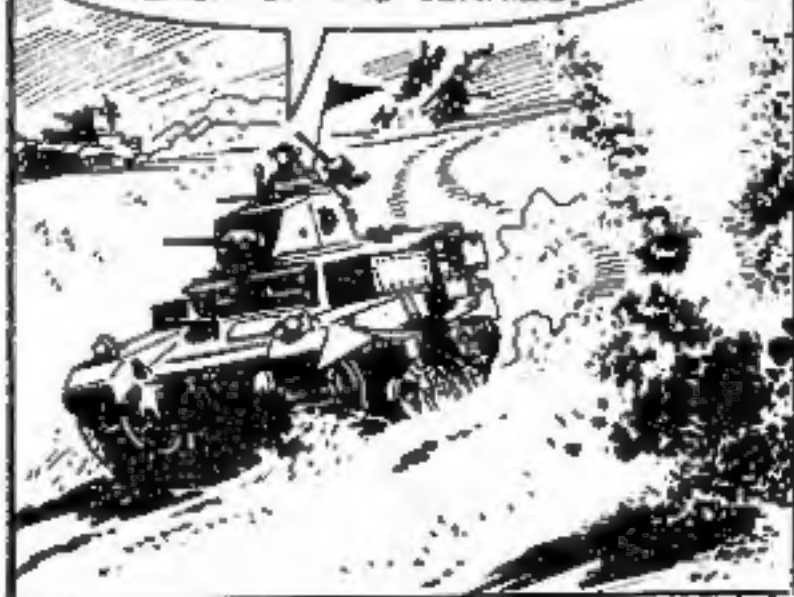
NO SHELLS WERE YET THREATENING THE FORMATION OF IRONCLADS WHICH HAD OPENED UP ON THE BRITISH. THEY WERE PANZERS OF THE AFRIKA KORPS, 23-TON MARK-FOURS...

OUR SEVENTY-FIVES WILL RIP THEM APART BEFORE THEY HAVE ANY OF US WITHIN THEIR RANGE, LEUTNANT.



OUTSUNNED, THE STUART HAD ONE OUTSTANDING FEATURE IN ITS FAVOUR. AN ADVANTAGE-ON WHICH THE COLONEL OF THE BRITISH DRAGOONS WAS PREPARED TO GAMBLE DESPERATELY...

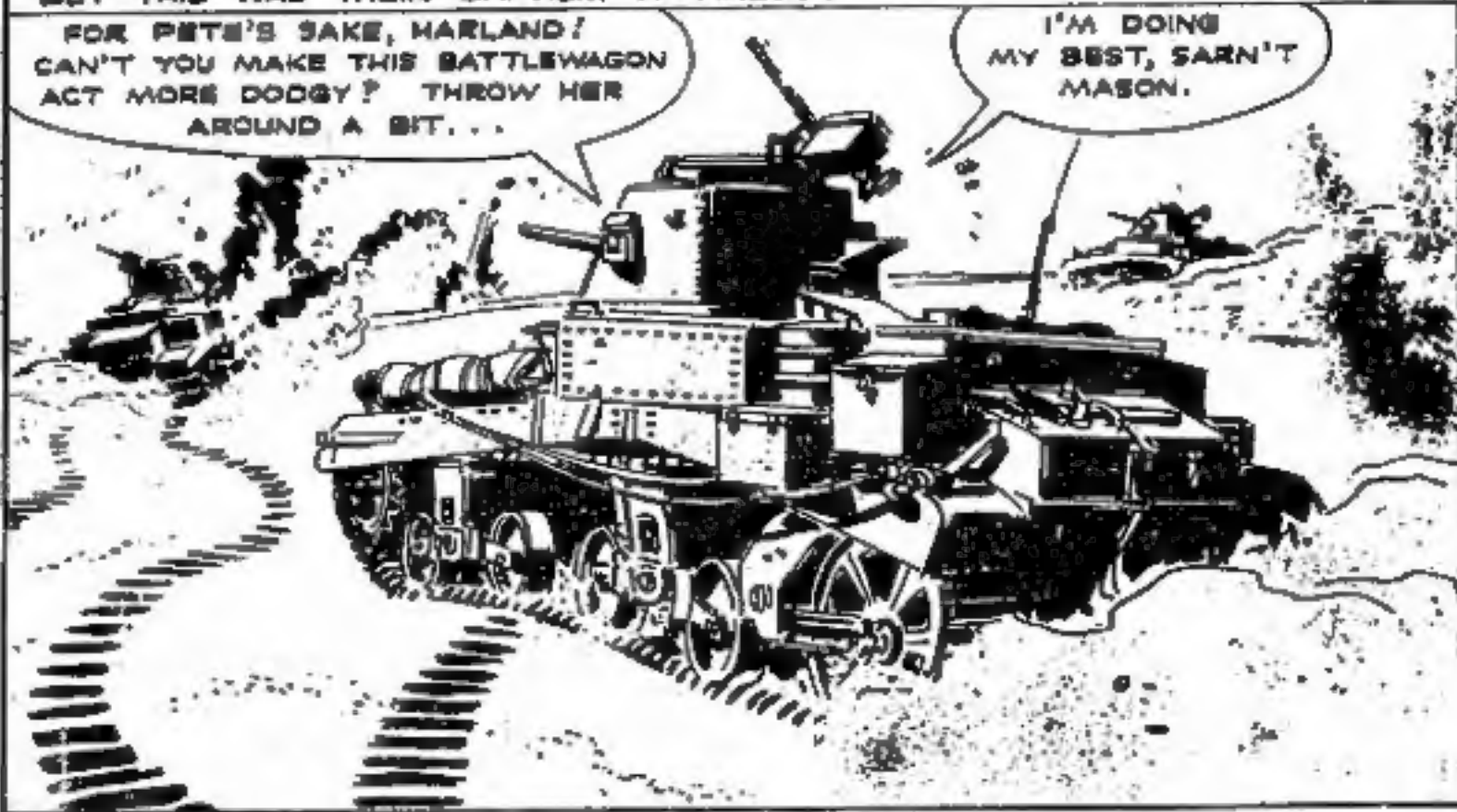
WEAVE, I SAID! I WANT TO SEE EVERY TANK JINKING LIKE A HARE! THAT'S HOW WE CAN OFFSET THE HEAVIER PUNCH AND LONGER REACH OF THE JERRIES!



THE IDEA BEHIND THE COLONEL'S TACTICAL MANOEUVRE WAS GOOD. IF HIS DRAGOONS HAD BEEN VETERANS, THEY MIGHT HAVE MADE IT WORK... BUT THIS WAS THEIR BAPTISM OF FIRE...

FOR PETE'S SAKE, HARLAND! CAN'T YOU MAKE THIS BATTLEWAGON ACT MORE DODGY? THROW HER AROUND A BIT...

I'M DOING MY BEST, SARN'T MASON.



THE REGIMENT TOOK CRUEL PUNISHMENT, TANK AFTER TANK FELL VICTIM TO THE FIRE OF THE HEAVY NAZI TANK-GUNS...

SALE OUT!  
HURRY, SHE'LL  
BREW UP ANY  
SECOND!



THE GERMANS WERE BLASTING AWAY WITH HIGH-EXPLOSIVE AS WELL AS ARMOUR-PIERCING AMMO. MASON'S DRIVER SAW A LIEUTENANT AND TWO TROOPERS GO DOWN IN THE LURID FLASH OF AN H.E. SHELL.





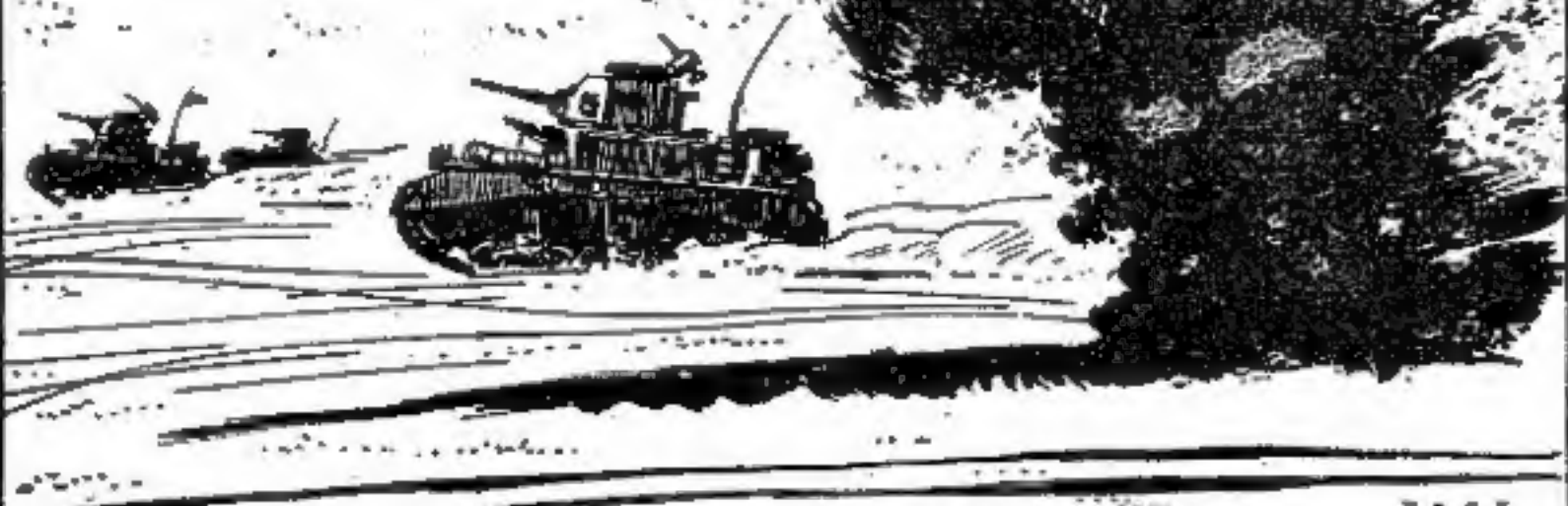
## Open Sights





THE REST OF THE STUARTS THAT HAD SURVIVED THE GERMANS' FIRST SALVOES WERE YAWNING ONWARD. MASON DID NOT LIKE IT...

TALK ABOUT THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE! I'D GIVE A LOT TO BE GOING THE OTHER WAY...



THROUGH HIS PERISCOPE HE SAW TWO OF THE STUARTS WORK NEAR ENOUGH TO THE PANZERS TO SNAP AT THEM LIKE TERRIERS... CONTRARY TO THE NAZIS' SPECULATIONS...

THE CROSS-WIRES OF THE SIGHT ARE SPOT-ON TARGET, CAPTAIN O'BRIEN.

THEN WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? FIRE!



FOR A WEHRMACHT HAUPTMANN, THE WAR ENDED IN THE JOLTING BLAST OF A DESPISED 37-MILLIMETRE SHELL!

AAAARGH!



BUT THE TWO STUARTS WERE SWIFTLY SLUDGED INTO SCRAP METAL BY THE CONCENTRATED TORRENT OF GERMAN FIRE...

IT'S A MASSACRE!  
THIS WHOLE  
SET-UP'S AN  
OUT-AND-OUT  
MASSACRE!

MAYBE SO, SARGE,  
BUT ALL I WANT IS A  
CRACK AT THOSE  
PERISHING NAZIS! IF  
HARLAND CAN GET US  
A SHADE CLOSER...





## Open Sights

MASON'S GUNNER WAS DENIED HIS WISH. THE DRAGOON'S COMMANDING OFFICER COULD SEE ONLY TOO CLEARLY THAT HIS GAMBLE HAD NOT PAID OFF — AND WOULD NEVER PAY OFF NOW.

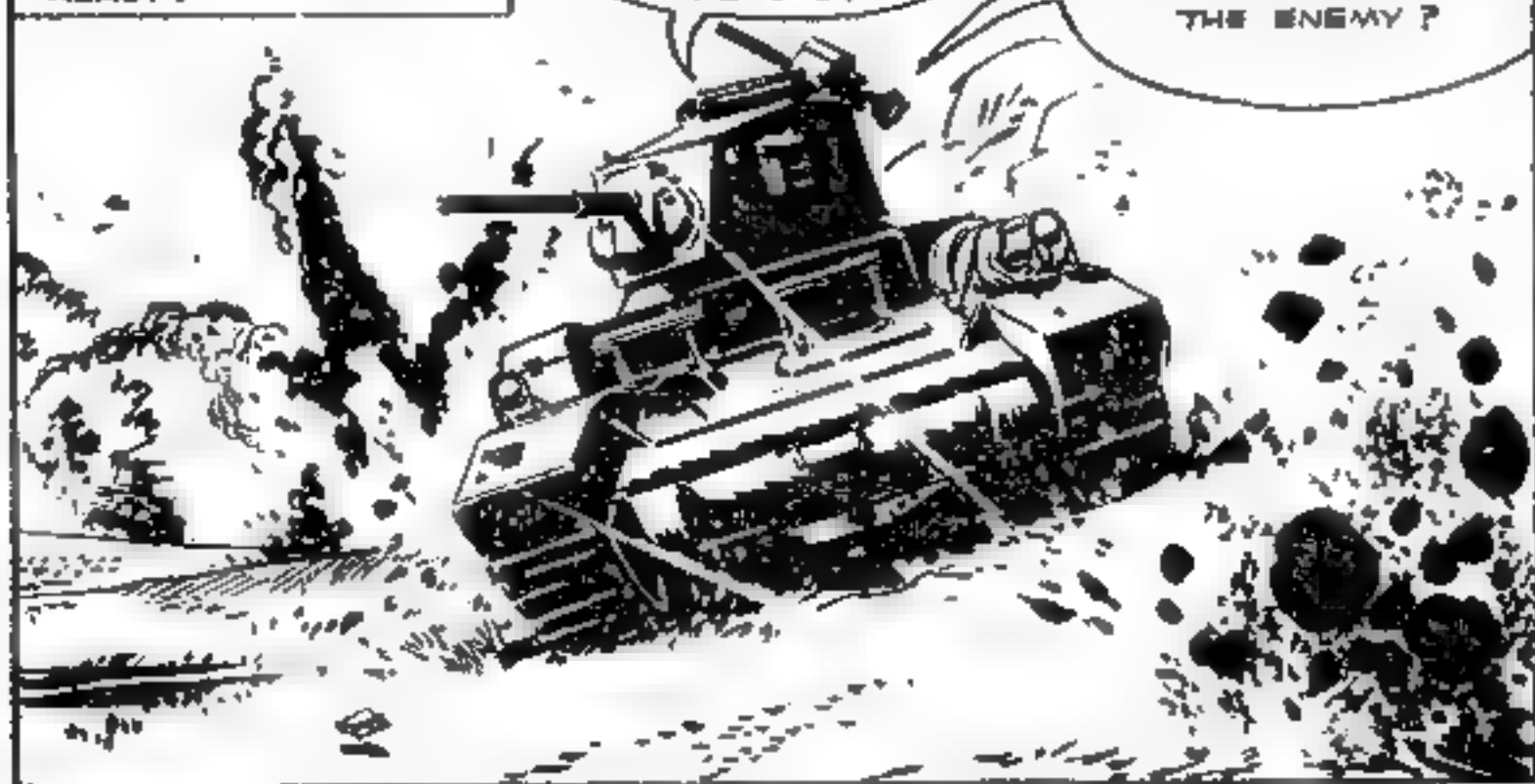
I WISH THE OLD MAN WOULD KEEP HIS HEAD DOWN! IT FAIR GIVES ME THE SHIVERS TO WATCH HIM!

HALF OF US SHOT TO BITS IF I DON'T CALL OFF THE ADVANCE, THE REGIMENT WILL BE FINISHED. NOTHING FOR IT BUT TO

THE COLONEL'S ORDER CAME OVER THE AIR. MASON WAS THE FIRST MAN IN THE UNIT TO REACT!

SCARPER, MARLAND! SWING HER HARD ROUND AND STEP ON THE GAS!

AIN'T IT BETTER TO BACK OUT OF ACTION, SARN'T, AND KEEP THE FRONT OF OUR HULL FACING THE ENEMY?

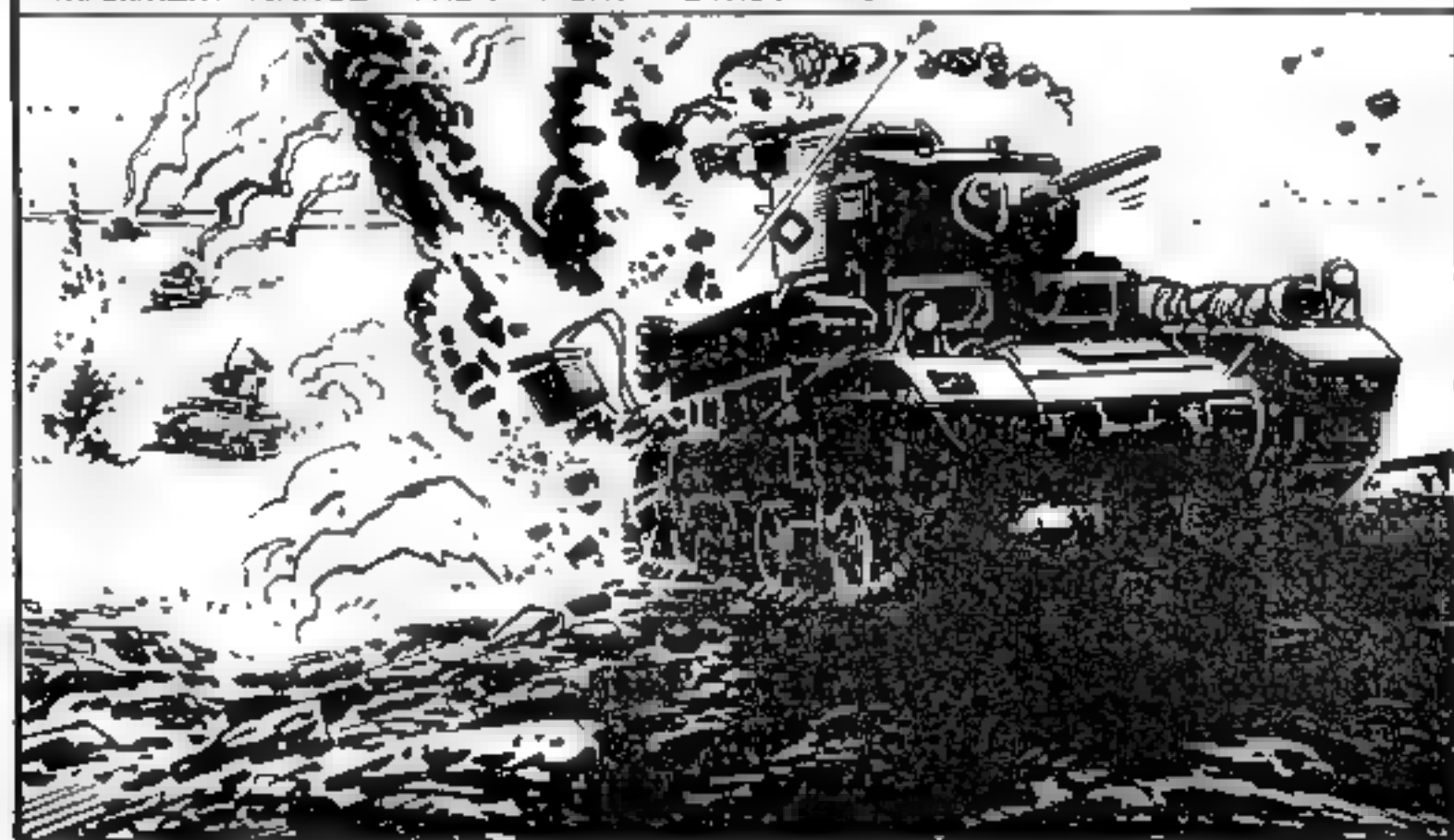


HARLAND WAS RIGHT. THE TANK'S ARMOUR PLATING WAS THICK IN FRONT, THIN AT THE BACK. BUT MASON WAS IN NO MOOD FOR A DISCUSSION ON BATTLE-DRILL...

DON'T ARGUE, HARLAND! GET TO HECK OUT OF HERE — FAST AS YOU CAN!



THE TANK TURNED TAIL UNDER HARLAND'S NIMBLE HANDS. IT WAS AT MAXIMUM RANGE WHEN A SHOT STRUCK IT!





AT THAT DISTANCE, THE THICKER ARMOUR AT THE FRONT OF THE HULL MIGHT HAVE STOOD UP TO THE IMPACT HAD THE TANK REVERSED FROM THE BATTLE...

I KNEW IT!  
IF WE'D BACKED OFF,  
WE'D HAVE BEEN ALL  
RIGHT. THAT THIN-  
SKINNED ENGINE-  
COMPARTMENT WASN'T  
MADE TO STAND UP TO  
ARMOUR-PIERCING  
STUFF!

WRAP UP,  
HARLAND, YOU LONG  
STREAK! AT LEAST  
WE'RE OKAY!



DAN MASON AND HIS CREW DARTED FOR COVER... HARLAND, THE DRIVER... BOB GLENNIE, RADIO-MAN... AND SMUDGER SMITH, THE GUNNER.

WE'VE LOST MOST OF  
OUR TANKS. BUT A GOOD  
MANY OF THE CREWS SEEM  
TO HAVE COME OFF  
LUCKY...



THE SERGEANT STOPPED SHORT AS HARLAND  
SUDDENLY SPANG TO HIS FEET...

WHAT'S  
UP WITH  
HIM?



NEITHER SMUDGER  
NOR GLENNIE KNEW  
THE ANSWER. BUT  
HARLAND'S PURPOSE  
WAS SOON PLAIN...

TAKE IT EASY,  
MISTER FARRAN!  
I'LL BE RIGHT  
WITH YOU!





MASON WATCHED IN ASTONISHMENT AS HARLAND HELPED A FALLEN OFFICER TO HIS FEET AND BEGAN TO HALF CARRY HIM BACK TOWARDS THEM...



WHAT'S THAT LANCE - JACK THINK HE'S DOING - TRYING TO EARN A VICTORIA CROSS?

MAYBE ALL HARLAND'S AFTER IS ANOTHER TAP. HE SHOULD TAKE A TIP FROM ME... BOY - SOLDIER TEN YEARS AGO - SERGEANT AT THE START OF THE WAR WITHOUT HEARING A SHOT FIRED IN ANSWER...



BUT SERGEANT MASON ENDED BY TALKING TO THE EMPTY AIR...

AND I GOT MY TAPES BY USING MY BONGE, NOT RISKING IT...

HARLAND'S IN TROUBLE. LET'S GIVE HIM A HAND!



SMUDGER AND GLENNIE SCURRED FORWARD. WITH SHRAPNEL SLICING AROUND THEM, THEY HELPED HARLAND CARRY THE INJURED LIEUTENANT FARRAN BACK TO COVER.



THE WITHDRAWAL CONTINUED. WHAT WAS LEFT OF THE REGIMENT'S ARMOUR WAS LEAGUERED WITH THE SUPPLY-TRUCKS BEHIND A SCREEN OF INFANTRY

WHAT'S THE LATEST ON MISTER FARRAN, TOSH?

THE DOC SAYS HE'LL BE OKAY IN A WEEK OR SO. CONCUSSION, THAT'S ALL. NOT LIKE THE POOR FELLERS WHO WERE WITH H.M.





MISTER FARRAN ASKED  
THE DOC TO THANK US—  
AND SAID MASON—  
FOR PICKING HIM  
UP...

AND  
SERGEANT  
MASON? THAT'S  
A LAUGH!

AFTER THE FIASCO OF THAT DAY, DAN  
MASON'S STOCK DID NOT STAND  
PARTICULARLY HIGH WITH HIS CREWMEN.

I USED TO THINK  
MASON WAS TOUGH, BUT  
I'VE CHANGED MY MIND  
SINCE I SAW HIM IN  
ACTION...

HIS TROUBLE IS  
HE'S JUST OUT FOR  
NUMBER ONE, SMUDGE  
PROPER OLD SOLDIER,  
KNOW WHAT I MEAN?

AT THAT MOMENT, THE 'OLD SOLDIER' WAS AIRING HIS VIEWS ON THE  
DAY'S DISASTROUS BRUSH WITH THE ENEMY...

THREE STUARTS  
DON'T STAND AN  
EARTHLY AGAINST  
THE JERRY TWENTY-  
THREE TON  
TANKS...

YOU'RE DEAD  
RIGHT, MASON. LET'S HOPE  
WE GET THE BIG AMERICAN  
GENERAL GRANTS BEFORE WE  
GO INTO ACTION AGAIN...



## Chapter 2. *Russian Front*

THE DRAGOONS WERE PULLED BACK TO AN ENCAMPMENT NEAR CAIRO. FROM THERE, SELECTED PERSONNEL WERE SENT ON A SPECIALISED COURSE. . . .



LIEUTENANT FARRAN, DAN MASON, LANCE-CORPORAL HARLAND, BOB GLENNIE, SMLDGER SMITH — THEY WERE AMONG THOSE WHO HAD BEEN SELECTED. . .



THIRTY-EIGHT-AND-A-HALF-TON TANKS, UP-GUNNED FOR A SLUGGING-MATCH WITH THE AFRIKA KORPS' BEST... THESE WERE FITTING INSTRUMENTS OF VENGEANCE FOR THE EAGER DRAGONS!

BRITISH TO THE LAST NUT,  
EXCEPT FOR THE SEVENTY-FIVE  
MILLIMETRE CANNON IN THE  
TURRET. THAT'S AN AMERICAN  
JOB. THE CO-AXIAL MACHINE-GUN  
AND THE HULL MACHINE-GUN  
ARE BOTH SESAS



EVEN DAN MASON LOOKED WELL-SATISFIED, THOUGH HE WOULD NOT HAVE ADMITTED TO BEING EAGER FOR THE PRAY...

THAT'S MORE LIKE IT...  
THE ARMOUR'S A SIGHT  
DIFFERENT, TOO—OVER A  
HUNDRED MILLIMETRES  
THICK, INSTEAD OF THE  
STUARTS THIRTY  
ODD...



MASON SWITCHED HIS ATTENTION TO THE MAN WHO STOOD ON THE CHURCHILL'S HULL...

I WOULDN'T  
MIND BEING IN HIS  
BOOTS. CUSHY JOB,  
ACTING AS  
INSTRUCTOR...





A WEEK OR TWO LATER, THE DRAGOONS ON THAT COURSE RETURNED TO THEIR UNITS. WITHIN FORTY EIGHT HOURS OF REPORTING, DAN MASON FELT LIKE A MAN WHO HAD HAD A MAGIC WAND WAVED OVER HIM...

YOU SENT FOR ME, MISTER FARRAN?

PREPARE YOURSELF FOR A BIT OF A BLOW, SERGEANT. YOU AND I ARE TO BE SECONDED FROM THE REGIMENT TO CARRY OUT INSTRUCTIONAL DUTIES!

MASON'S FACE WAS DEADPAN...BUT HE FELT LIKE WHOOPING WITH JOY...

OUR ASSIGNMENT WILL TAKE US TO RUSSIA, SERGEANT...TO A PLACE CALLED STALINGRAD...

STALINGRAD...? NEVER HEARD OF IT, SIR... IS ANYBODY ELSE GOING BESIDES YOU AND ME MISTER FARRAN?

WE'RE TO MAKE  
UP A TROOP—  
FIFTEEN OF US,  
ALL TOLD...



IT SEEMED A CONSIGNMENT OF THE  
MODIFIED CHURCHILLS WAS BEING  
DELIVERED TO SOVIET ARMY UNITS  
LYING IN RESERVE, DEEP BEHIND THE  
UKRAINE FRONT...

WE'LL PASS ON OUR KNOWLEDGE  
TO RUSSIAN PERSONNEL. I KNOW  
YOU'RE AS BRASSED OFF ABOUT  
THIS AS I AM, MASON, BUT WE'LL  
HAVE TO MAKE THE BEST OF IT.



FARRAN WOULD HAVE BEEN  
SHOCKED IF HE HAD KNOWN  
WHAT WAS PASSING THROUGH  
MASON'S MIND... LATER  
THAT AFTERNOON, THE  
SERGEANT GRINNED BROADLY  
AS HE CALLED HIS CREW  
TOGETHER

I'VE GOT  
NEWS FOR YOU  
COVES /  
GREAT NEWS!



HE TOLD THEM OF THE POSTING TO STALINGRAD, AND ROUNDED OFF HIS ACCOUNT OF IT WITH A SMUG PRONOUNCEMENT...



I'M RECOMMENDING YOU THREE AS CANDIDATES. LET'S GET AWAY FROM ALL THIS ROTTEN FIGHTING HERE, SH?

YOU CAN COUNT ME OUT, SARGE. I'D RATHER STAY WITH THE REGIMENT...

HARLAND AND BOB GLENN'S ECHOED SMUGGER'S SENTIMENTS. DAN MASON LOOKED AT THE THREE OF THEM PITIINGLY...

WHAT ARE YOU LOT — NUT-CASES OR SOMETHING? STAY HERE AND YOU STAND A GOOD CHANCE OF GETTING KILLED. AT STALINGRAD WE'LL BE SITTING PRETTY.

ALL WE WANT IS ANOTHER SMACK AT THE JERRIES, SARGE.



AT THAT THE SERGEANT LOST HIS TEMPER...

WELL, YOU'RE NOT GOING TO HAVE ANY PERISHIN' CHOICE, MATE. I'M PICKING YOU LOT TO GO WITH ME, AND NO ARGUMENTS...





THE MEN WHO WERE SELECTED TO GO TO RUSSIA WITH FARRAN AND MASON WERE PARADED IN THE C.O.'S TENT BEFORE LEAVING.

I APPRECIATE THAT YOU WANT TO REMAIN WITH THE REGIMENT, BUT I'M AFRAID IT'S OUT OF THE QUESTION. MY ORDERS HAVE COME FROM THE HIGHEST AUTHORITY



SO IT WAS THAT ONE OFFICER, ONE SERGEANT AND THIRTEEN DISGRUNTLED OTHER-RANKS ENTRAINED FOR A JOURNEY WHICH WAS TO TAKE THEM THROUGH PALESTINE, SYRIA AND IRAN

ALL ABOARD, LADS. MAKE IT SNAPPY.

LOOK ALIVE! IF YOU LOT DON'T WAKE YOUR IDEAS UP, THE RUSSKIES ARE GOING TO WISH YOU'D STAYED AT HOME!



## Open Sights

FROM IRAN, THEY  
EMBARKED ON A  
700-MILE VOYAGE  
NORTHWARD  
THROUGH THE  
GREAT INLAND SEA  
KNOWN AS THE  
PERSIAN...

IT'S FLAMING  
HOT, SIR—ABOUT  
AS HOT AS  
EGYPT.

FROM WHAT I'VE READ  
IT CAN BE COLD ENOUGH  
IN WINTER, SERREANT—  
ESPECIALLY ON THE  
STEPS AROUND  
STALINGRAD.



THEY LANDED AT  
ASTRAKHAN IN THE  
SOVIET UNION, AND WERE  
MET BY AN ENGLISH-  
SPEAKING RUSSIAN  
OFFICER...

LIEUTENANT KONIEFF—  
AT YOUR SERVICE. I AM  
TO ESCORT YOU TO YOUR  
DESTINATION.



IT WAS 300 MILES BY RAIL FROM ASTRAKHAN TO STALINGRAD, WHERE A TRUCK AWAITED THEM. THEY WERE WHISKED OFF THROUGH THE CITY...

THIS IS KNOWN AS HEROES' SQUARE. AND THE TALL BUILDING OVER THERE IS THE STALINGRAD DEPARTMENT-STORE.



FINALLY, THEY REACHED A RED ARMY BARRACKS A HALF-HOUR'S DRIVE WEST OF STALINGRAD ACROSS A PLAIN CALLED THE DON-VOLGA STEPPE...

HERE WE ARE, MISTER FARRAN—THIS IS ONE OF OUR MILITARY SCHOOLS FOR THE ADVANCED TRAINING OF OFFICERS AND MEN IN ARMoured UNITS.







DURING THE NEXT FEW DAYS, THE PARTY OF DRAGOONS SETTLED DOWN TO THE BUSINESS OF INSTRUCTING RED ARMY TANKMEN, THROUGH INTERPRETERS, IN THE INTRICACIES OF CHURCHILL TANKS. . .

TELL YOUR MEN THEY CAN TAKE IT FROM ME, CAPTAIN, THAT THIS TANK IS THE EQUAL OF ANY PANZER I EVER CAME UP AGAINST IN NORTH AFRICA.



SERGEANT DAN MASON'S  
CREW STOOD BY,  
LISTENING SCORNFULLY.

THAT BIG-HEAD MASON  
MAKES ME SICK! FROM THE  
WAY HE TALKS ANYONE'D THINK  
HE'D INVENTED PERISHIN'  
TANKS!



MASON SEEMED TO ENJOY THE  
SOUND OF HIS OWN VOICE...

LET ME STRESS THAT A  
TANK-COMMANDER'S TASK IS  
TO GET FORWARD INTO A  
POSITION WHERE HE CAN  
BRING DIRECT FIRE TO BEAR  
ON HIS ENEMY...



SLUDGER SMITH BARELY  
SUPPRESSED A SARCASTIC  
LAUGH AT MASON'S WORDS...



HARK AT  
HIM! SOME  
PERISHIN' HERO HE  
IS! MASON WOULDN'T  
EVEN BE ABLE TO  
FIGHT HIS WAY OUT OF  
A PAPER BAG!

DAY BY DAY, WEEK BY WEEK, BATCH AFTER BATCH OF RUSSIANS WERE INITIATED INTO THE HANDLING OF CHURCHILL TANKS. TO ALL THE DRAGOONS EXCEPT DAN MASON, TEACHING THEM BECAME A MONOTONOUS CHORE...

DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH OF THIS I CAN TAKE, SERGEANT. I'M FED UP WITH THIS JOB, AND SO ARE THE REST OF THE MEN. HOW ABOUT YOU?

BEING A REGULAR, SIR, MAYBE I'M MORE USED TO MAKING THE BEST OF A BAD SITUATION...

4  
WABEY



TO HIMSELF, DAN ADMITTED THE SITUATION SUITED HIM FINE. BUT ONE SUNDAY EVENING, WHEN HE RETURNED FROM A WEEK-END FURLOUGH...

THANKS FOR THE LIFT, TOVARICH. HEY, IS THAT GUNFIRE? SORRY, CHUM, YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND ENGLISH.



NO, HE CAN'T, SERGEANT BUT THAT IS GUNFIRE. THE GERMANS HAVE LAUNCHED AN OFFENSIVE TOWARDS THE RIVER DON.



I THOUGHT THE RED ARMY WAS DOING THE ATTACKING IN THE UKRAINE, LIEUTENANT KONIEFF.

THAT WAS TRUE, BUT THE NAZIS HAVE THROWN A HUNDRED DIVISIONS INTO AN ALL-OUT EFFORT. IT SEEMS THEY ARE SUCCEEDING...



THE GERMAN 'PUTSCH' WAS SUCCEEDING. AT THAT MOMENT, JACKBOOTED BATTALIONS WERE MARCHING WITH THE STRIDE OF CONQUERERS...

RAISE YOUR VOICES, MEN. LET'S HEAR THE BATTLE-ANTHEM OF THE REICH — 'DEUTSCHLAND, DEUTSCHLAND, ÜBER ALLES'...



EAST OF THE RIVER, HARD-PRESSED RUSSIAN INFANTRYMEN  
FOUGHT WITH STUBBORN VALOUR TO HOLD A BUCKLED BUT  
UNBROKEN DEFENCE-LINE...



YET NOTHING SEEMED TO STOP THE IMPETUS OF THE GERMAN ADVANCE...

FORWARD —  
FOR FUHRER AND  
FATHERLAND!



THE RUSSIANS WERE FORCED BACK...  
AND BACK... TO WITHIN THIRTY MILES  
OF STALINGRAD...

THE WHOLE  
BATTALION IS  
DIGGING-IN AS  
ORDERED, MAJOR  
PETROVSKI.

OUR WATCHWORD  
SHOULD BE ATTACK, NOT  
DEFENCE! BUT WITHOUT  
THE SUPPORT OF TANKS,  
HOW CAN WE HOPE TO  
SUCCEED?



THE ACUTE SHORTAGE OF ARMOUR ON THE APPROACHES TO STALINGRAD  
PRESENTED A DESPERATE PROBLEM NOW. ALL AVAILABLE MONCLADS WERE  
BEING FED INTO THE BATTLE...

THERE GO THE  
LAST OF THE TANKS  
FROM THIS SCHOOL—  
EXCEPT FOR THE CHURCHILLS  
WE'VE BEEN USING FOR  
OUR INSTRUCTION  
CLASSES.

IF THE RUSSIANS  
HAD ENOUGH STAFF  
HERE, THEY'D HAVE  
MANNED THOSE THREE AS  
WELL AND SETTLED OFF  
TO THE FRONT  
WITH 'EM.



## Open Sights

THE DUST SETTLED BEHIND THE DEPARTING TANKS. SERGEANT MASON CAME ON THE SCENE. HE WAS TAUT WITH ANGER...



THERE WAS A BRIEF SILENCE AS THE OTHER DRAGOONS TOOK IN WHAT MASON HAD SAID. IT WAS A SILENCE BROKEN BY LANCE-CORPORAL HARLAND...





HARLAND STUCK OUT HIS JAW...

YOU DO  
WHAT YOU LIKE,  
SERGEANT MASON, BUT  
I'M READY TO FIGHT THE  
PERISHING NAZIS ANY  
TIME, ANYWHERE!



A DOZEN OTHER VOICES WERE  
RAISED IN SUPPORT FOR THE  
LANCE-JACK. DAN MASON  
GLOWERED AT THEM SCOFFINGLY.

OKAY, YOU MUGS,  
GET YOURSELVES WIPE  
OUT! I'M GOING TO  
STALINGRAD, AND I'M ASKING  
TO BE REPATRIATED,  
DOUBLE-QUICK!



I'M NOT  
THE KIND TO  
STICK OUT MY NECK  
FOR ANYBODY, IF I  
CAN HELP IT!  
DARNED IF I'LL STICK  
IT OUT FOR THE  
IVANS!



THERE WAS NO SIGN OF DAN MASON WHEN LEUTENANT FARRAN ARRIVED IT WAS HARLAND WHO TOLD THE OFFICER OF MASON'S DECISION.

SERGEANT MASON  
MAY WELL BE WITHIN HIS  
RIGHTS. I'M NOT SURE I  
HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO  
ASK YOU BLOKES TO  
BACK ME UP.

DON'T  
WORRY, SIR.  
WE'RE ALL  
WITH YOU!



THE THREE CHURCHILLS WERE FUELLED, AND LOADED UP WITH AMMUNITION. THE 350-B.H.P. BEDFORD ENGINES CHURNED INTO LIFE...

HOLD IT,  
DRIVER. WAIT FOR  
LEUTENANT KONIEFF.  
HE'LL BE RIDING WITH  
US AS LIAISON  
OFFICER.

\*H3HO  
ADCTUX  
→



KONIEFF TRAVELLED ON THE HULL OF FARRAN'S TANK. HE HAD ORDERS TO CONDUCT THE TROOP TO A BRIGADE HEADQUARTERS. FROM THERE HE WAS DIRECTED TO A BATTALION H.Q..

MAJOR  
PETROVSKI?

YES, I  
AM MAJOR  
PETROVSKI.



KONIEFF AND PETROVSKI BEGAN TO CONVERSE HEATEDLY. ALTHOUGH THEY SPOKE IN RUSSIAN, FARRAN COULD SEE THAT SOMETHING HAD UPSET THE MAJOR.

WHY MUST I BE  
SADDLED WITH THESE  
BRITISH? WHY CAN I NOT  
HAVE RUSSIAN-MANNED  
ARMOUR TO SPEARHEAD  
THIS ASSAULT?

BECAUSE THERE IS  
NO RUSSIAN-MANNED ARMOUR  
AT HAND. IT HAS ALL BEEN  
CHANNELLED INTO OTHER  
SECTORS OF THE  
FRONT.



MINUTES WENT BY. AT LENGTH, KONIEFF TURNED TO FARRAN...



HE EXPLAINED THE OPERATION TO THE ENGLISHMAN. WATCHES WERE SYNCHRONISED, AND, EXACTLY HALF-AN-HOUR LATER, THE CHURCHILLS LUNGED FORWARD...





THEY CLANKED THROUGH PETROVSKI'S BATTALION AREA AND LUMBERED OUT BEYOND IT. FROM A LONG, LOW FOLD IN THE STEPPE, NARROWED EYES WATCHED THEM . . .

NUMBER ONE  
GUN... RANGE—EIGHT  
HUNDRED METRES...



THROUGH HIS VISION-SLOT, HARLAND GLIMPSED A WICKED FLASH, AND SAW A TRACER-SHELL BURNING ITS WAY THROUGH THE AIR . . .

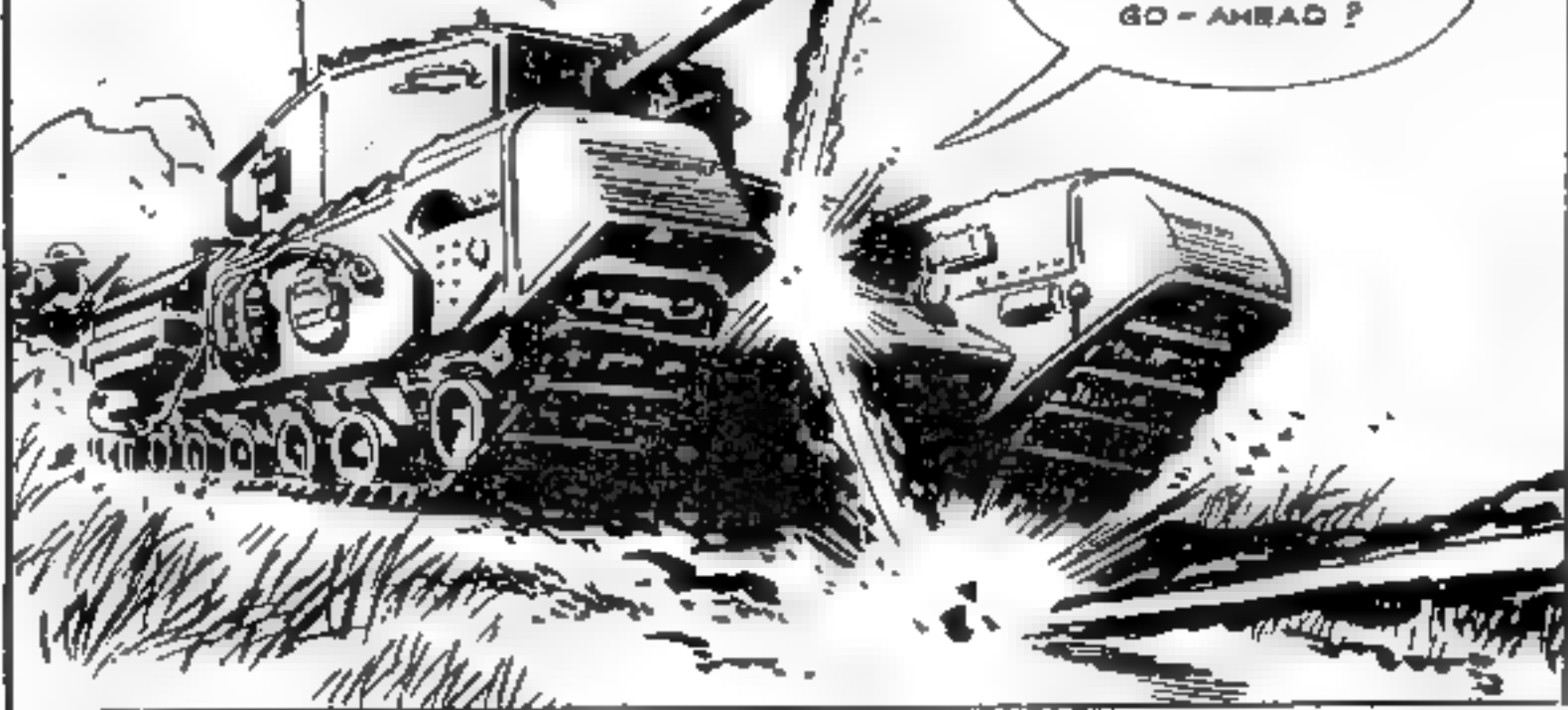
GOOD GRIEF!  
IT'S COMING  
STRAIGHT AT  
ME!



THE FIRE BARBED SHOT DROPPED SHORT, BOUNCED, HIT THE HULL AND RICOCHETED HIGH...

WE'VE  
COPPED ONE,  
DUSTY—SPANG  
ON THE NOSE!

IT GLANCED OFF,  
CORP. NO DAMAGE  
DONE. BUT AIN'T IT  
ABOUT TIME MISTER  
FARRAN GAVE OUR  
GUNNERS THE  
GO- AHEAD?



AT THAT MOMENT, LIEUTENANT FARRAN  
HAD COME TO THE SAME DECISION...

OKAY, SEVENTY-FIVES!  
EIGHT HUNDRED YARDS.  
TARGET—ENEMY ANTI-  
TANK GUNS.  
FIRE!



FLAME AND STEEL WHIPPED FROM THE CHURCHILL'S GUN MUZZLES. THREE SHELLS SCREAMED ACROSS THE STEPPE. TWO MISSED BUT THE THIRD SMASHED HOME RIGHT ON TARGET!

AAACH!  
HIMMEL!



THE GERMAN POSITION WAS SUDDENLY DAPPLED WITH THE STAB OF HALF-A-DOZEN GUN-FLASHES. HEAVIER GERMAN GUNS HAD TAKEN UP THE BARRAGE...

DRIVERS!  
WINKING TACTICS!  
HALF-LEFT FOR  
FIFTY YARDS...  
NOW!



THAT WAS WHERE FARRAN MADE A TRAGIC BLUNDER. UNFAMILIAR WITH THE RUSSIAN METHOD OF ADVANCING IN COLUMN BEHIND PROTECTING ARMOUR, HE EXPOSED THE FOLLOWING INFANTRY TO DIRECT GERMAN FIRE



ALL ALONG THE NAZI FRONT IN THAT SECTOR OF THE BATTLE-LINE, SMALL-ARMS LASHED OUT A MURDEROUS BLIZZARD OF BULLETS. THE RED ARMY MEN FELL IN DROVES.





FARRAN QUICKLY REALISED HIS ERROR. HE TRIED TO RECTIFY IT, BUT IT WAS TOO LATE. THE RUSSIANS HAD BEEN THROWN INTO CONFUSION, THEIR ATTACK FELL OUT OF GEAR...

THEY'RE BEING  
MOWN DOWN! AND  
IT'S ALL MY FAULT!  
ALL MY FAULT!



NUMBERS OF PETROVSKI'S MEN TRIED TO STRUGGLE ON, BUT THE DEADLY ACCURACY OF THE GERMANS' FIRE BEAT THEM. TO END THE BUTCHERY, PETROVSKI ORDERED A RETREAT...

A HUMAN  
SACRIFICE! THAT'S  
HOW IT HAS TURNED  
OUT, KONIEFF! AND THERE  
IS WHERE THE BLAME  
LIES! THE  
BRITISH!



FARRAN'S TROOP OF CHURCHILLS REVERSED SLOWLY WITH BIGAS BLATTERING AND SEVENTY-FIVES POUNDING, IN A DESPERATE EFFORT TO COVER THE WITHDRAWAL...



BUT AS THE TANKS REACHED PETROVSKI'S LINES, THE RUSSIAN MAJOR SPLUTTERED A VITRIOLIC SPATE OF WORDS AT FARRAN...



# Chapter 3. *Embattled City*

SO THE RUSSIAN COUNTER-OFFENSIVE FAILED. THE GERMANS SEIZED THE INITIATIVE AGAIN, AND BY MID-SEPTEMBER THEY WERE IN STALINGRAD...

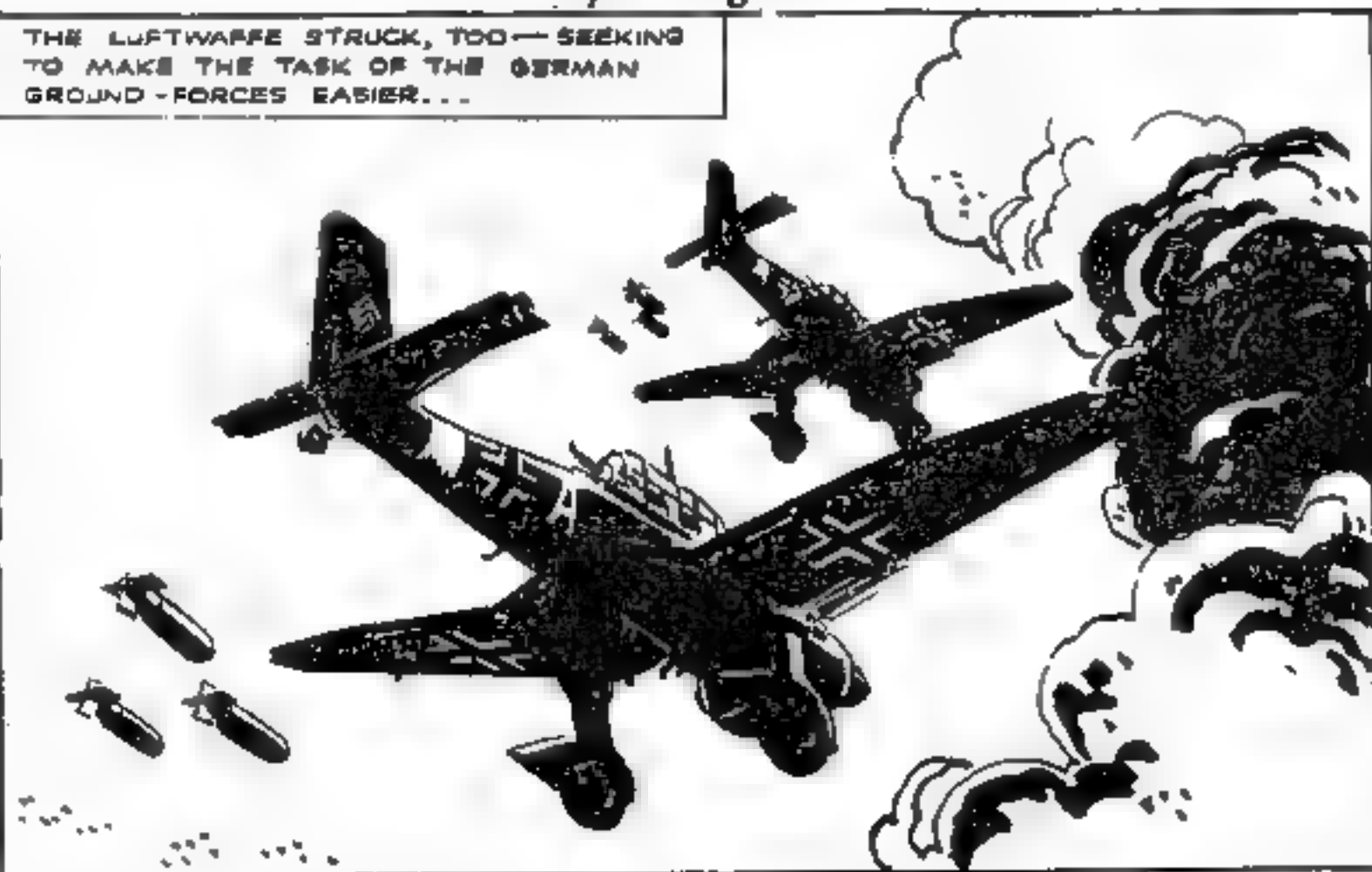


HEAVY ARTILLERY GAVE CLOSE SUPPORT TO THE NAZI STORM-GROUPS. HOWITZER SHELLS SAVAGED THE CITY...

THEY'RE HEADING FOR THE CELLARS!  
BY JIMINY! I'M PICKING A GOOD DEEP ONE FOR MYSELF!



THE LUFTWAFFE STRUCK, TOO—SEEKING TO MAKE THE TASK OF THE GERMAN GROUND FORCES EASIER...



ATTACHED TO THE REMNANTS OF A BRIGADE WITH WHICH THEY HAD RETREATED ACROSS THE DON-VOLGA STEPPE, FARRAN AND HIS TROOP FELT THE POWER OF THE AERIAL BLITZ...

COME, MISTER FARRAN, GET YOUR MEN DOWN INTO THE CELLARS!

NO, LIEUTENANT KONIEFF, WE'LL TAKE OUR CHANCE INSIDE OUR VEHICLES.





THE STREET IN WHICH THE CHURCHILLS WERE PARKED BECAME A SHAMBLES, BUT THE TANKS SURVIVED...

WHAT A CLOSSERING! THERE WON'T BE ANYTHING LEFT OF STALINGRAD BUT A PILE OF RUINS BY THE TIME THE JERRIES TAKE IT, BOB...

IF THEY TAKE IT, SAUDGER...

THE BRIGADE WITH WHICH FARRAN'S TROOP WAS LINKED HAD TAKEN A WAREHOUSE AS THEIR HEADQUARTERS. THE BUILDING WAS A TOTAL WRITE-OFF WHEN THE LUFTWAFFE HAD FINISHED WITH IT...

LOOKS LIKE THE CELLARS STOOD UP TO THE BOMBING

THEY MUST HAVE DONE, MATE. BUT WHAT'S WRONG WITH LIEUTENANT KONIGER? HE SEEMS TO BE IN A FLAP ABOUT SOMETHING.



COVERED WITH DUST, KONIEFF STUMBLERD THROUGH THE DEBRIS TO FARRAN'S TANK.



JUST BEFORE THE LAST BOMBS FELL, AN S.O.S. WAS RECEIVED FROM ONE OF OUR UNITS WHICH HAS BEEN SURROUNDED AND IS IN DANGER OF ANNIHILATION.

YOUR BRIGADIER WANTS ME TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT, LEUTENANT?

YES, SPEED IS VITAL... ONLY, THIS MAY WELL PROVE TO BE A SUICIDAL MISSION

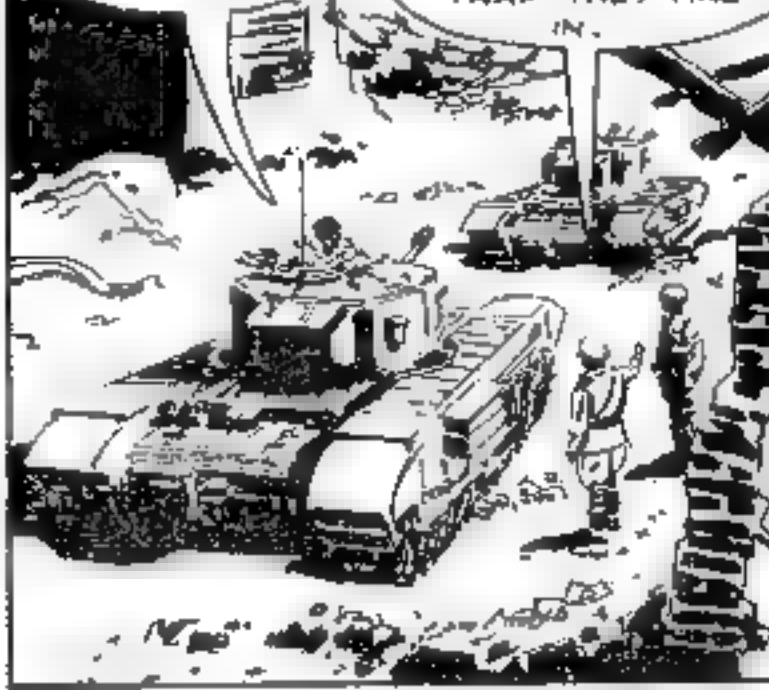


FARRAN ANSWERED THE RUSSIAN LIEUTENANT WITH A GRIM SMILE

LET ME WORRY ABOUT THAT, TOVARICH. WHAT DOES YOUR BRIG. HAVE IN MIND?

HE SUGGESTS BREACHING THE GERMAN RING AND THEN SPEARHEADING OUR MEN OUT OF THE TRAP THEY ARE

IN.



THE ENGLISHMAN NODDED. KONIEFF MOTIONED TO THE LEADING IRONCLAD.

I'LL RIDE IN THE FIRST TANK AND LET ITS DRIVER KNOW THE ROUTE...BY THE WAY, THE UNIT WHICH HAS BEEN SURROUNDED IS PETROVSKI'S. DOES THAT MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE TO YOU?



IT MADE ALL THE DIFFERENCE. THE EXPRESSION ON THE BRITISH SUBALTERN'S FACE BECAME EVEN MORE GRIMLY DETERMINED!

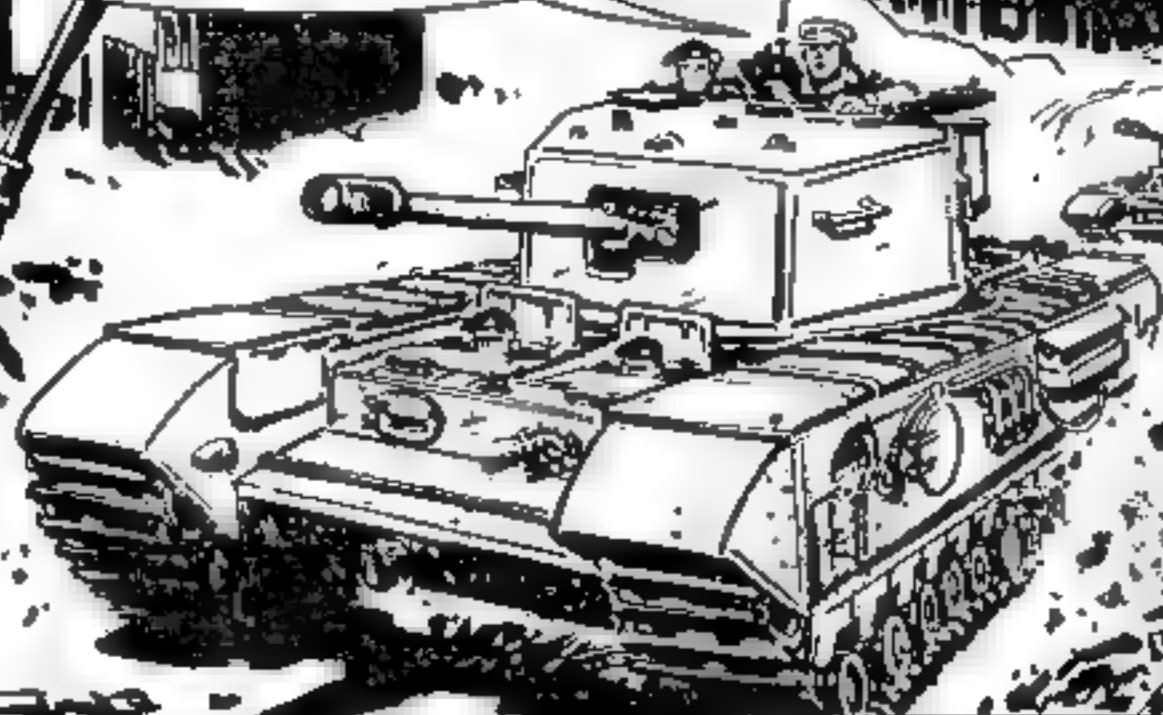
LET'S GET CRACKING, LIEUTENANT KONIEFF! I'LL PULL MAJOR PETROVSKI AND HIS MEN OUT OF THE FIX THEY'RE IN, IF IT'S THE LAST THING I DO! I OWE THEM THAT MUCH!



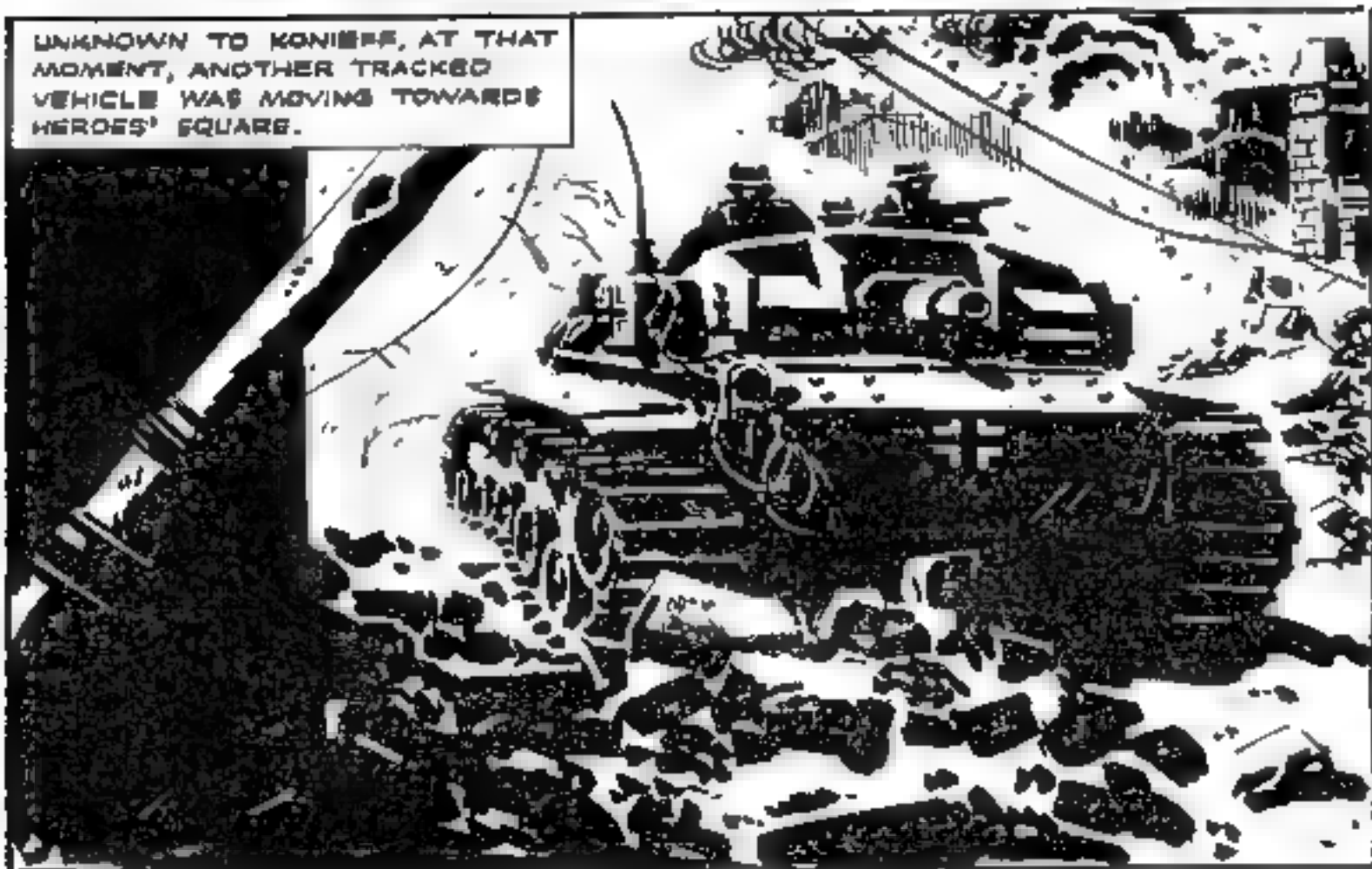
## Open Sights

THE ENGINES GROWLED. THE THREE MAMMOTHS OF MECHANISED WAR RUMBLING DOWN THE SHATTERED STREET...

TURN LEFT AT THE NEXT INTERSECTION. YOU WILL THEN SEE AN OPEN AREA BEFORE YOU. THAT'S HEROES' SQUARE...



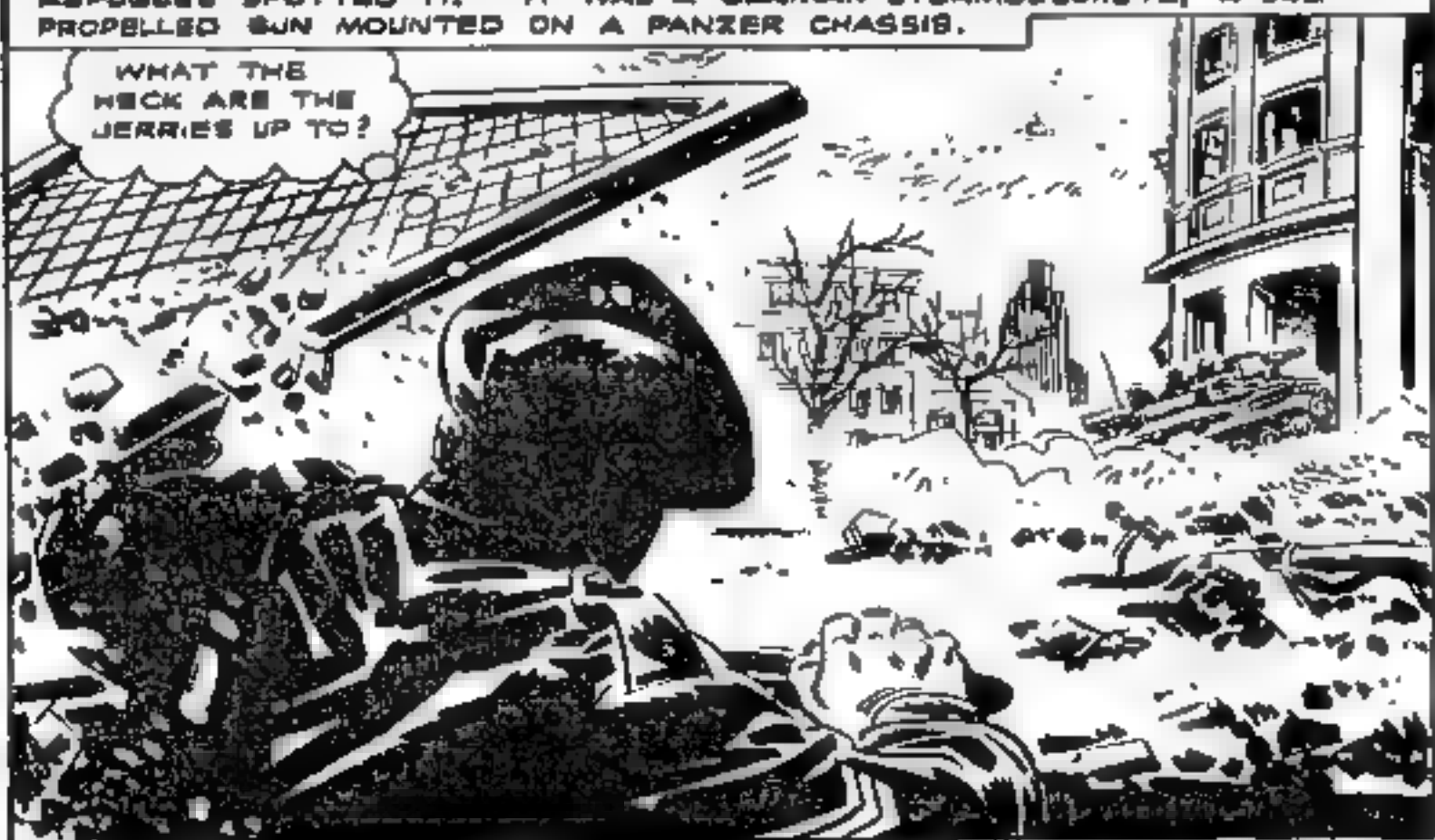
UNKNOWN TO KONIERS, AT THAT MOMENT, ANOTHER TRACKED VEHICLE WAS MOVING TOWARDS HEROES' SQUARE.





BOBBING UP WARILY FROM A CELLAR, ONE OF STALINERAD'S UNDERGROUND REFUGEES SPOTTED IT. IT WAS A GERMAN STURMGESCHUTZ, A SELF-PROPELLED GUN MOUNTED ON A PANZER CHASSIS.

WHAT THE  
HECK ARE THE  
JERRIES UP TO?



A CASTAWAY ON THE TIDE OF WAR, ■■■ MASON SOON HAD THE ANSWER TO HIS QUESTION. WITHIN MINUTES, THE MOBILE GUN CLAIMED A VICTIM...



SO THAT'S  
THEIR IDEA, EH?  
STAY OUT OF  
SIGHT AND LIE  
DOGGED TILL THEY  
CAN'T MISS!  
DEAD-CRAFTY...



THE RUSSIAN LORRY,  
PACKED WITH TROOPS,  
WAS A TOTAL WRECK...

WIPE OUT, EVERY  
ONE OF 'EM. I'D BETTER  
SIT TIGHT AND KEEP OUT  
OF SIGHT—OR I'LL  
WIND UP THE SAME  
WAY.

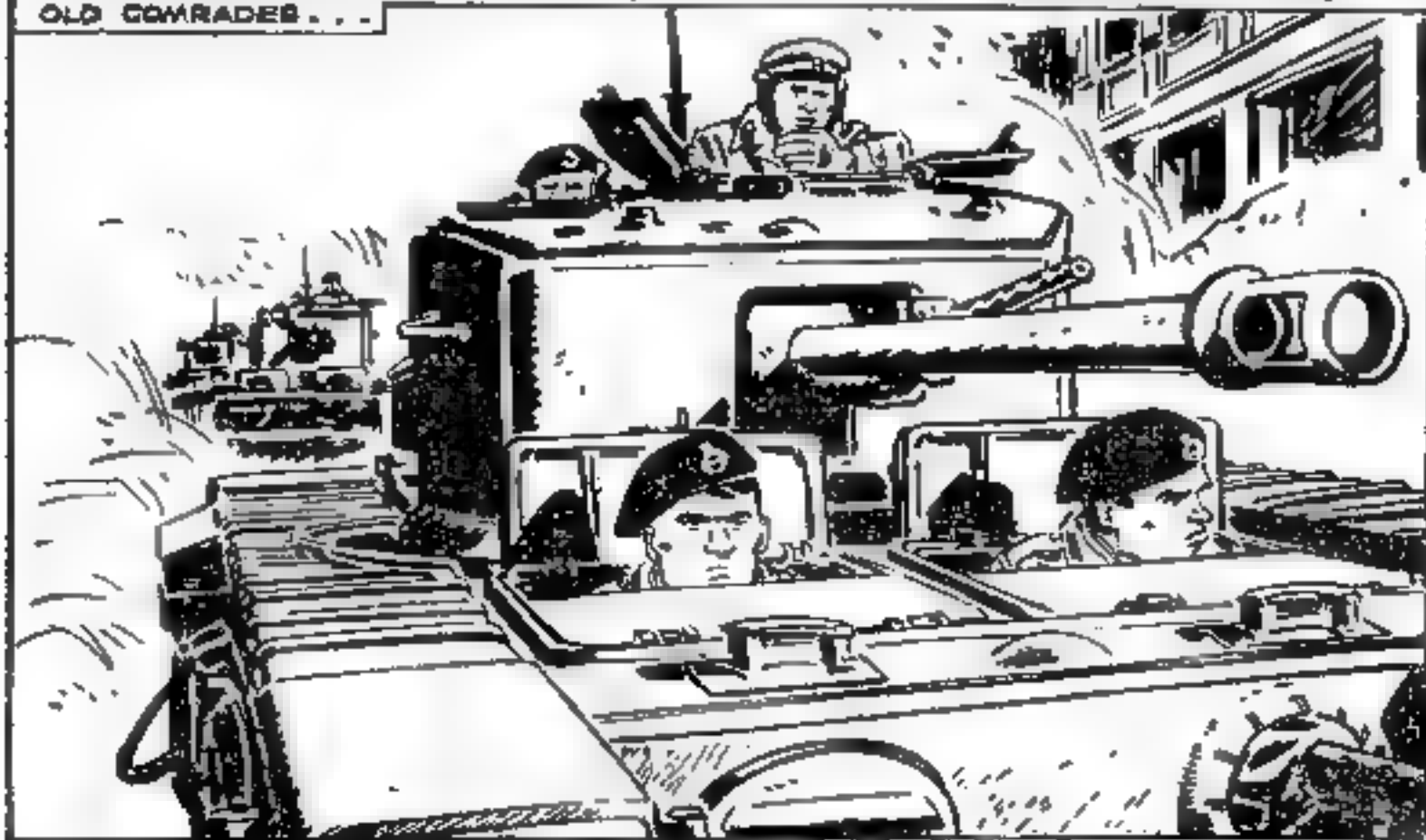


DAN MASON HAD BARELY MUTTERED THOSE WORDS OF COUNSEL TO HIMSELF WHEN HE HEARD THE BEAT OF ENGINES AND THE GRINDING OF CATERPILLAR TRACKS.

CHURCHILLS! MAYBE  
SHOULD NIP OUT AND  
WARN THE RUSSKI IN THE  
TURRET OF THAT FIRST  
ONE. NO, BETTER NOT  
I'D BE A TARGET FOR  
THE JERRIES THE  
MINUTE I SHOWED  
MYSELF.



THEN MASON REALISED THAT, ALTHOUGH THE MAN IN THE TURRET OF THE LEADING CHURCHILL WAS RUSSIAN, THE DRIVER AND CO-DRIVER WERE HIS OLD COMRADES . . .



HE WAS WATCHING FARRAN'S TROOP, THE TROOP TO WHICH HE HAD BELONGED. HE WAS WATCHING FORMER COMRADES ADVANCING TO A RENDEZVOUS WITH SUDDEN AND CERTAIN DEATH.

THE NAZIS'LL  
WAIT TILL ALL THREE  
CHURCHILLS ARE IN THE  
SQUARE. THEN THEY'LL  
BLAST 'EM IN QUICK  
SUCCESSION.



AT THAT INSTANT, SOMETHING  
HAPPENED TO SERGEANT DAN  
MASON...

I CAN'T  
JUST SKULK HERE  
AND SEE THEM  
SLAUGHTERED!



HE SHED THE 'OLD  
SOLDIER' GUESS, AND  
BECAME WHAT YEARS OF  
TRAINING HAD MADE HIM  
IN SPIRIT OF HIMSELF — A  
SOLDIER, NOTHING LESS!

KEEP  
BACK, THERE!  
FOR PETE'S SAKE  
STAY AWAY FROM  
THIS SQUARE!





MASON STARTED TO RUN FULL-PELT. HE HEARD THE FEROCIOUS CRACK OF THE ENEMY GUN. A SHELL WHIZZED PAST HIM, SCORCHINGLY...

IF THIS DON'T BEAT ALL! IT'S SAR'NT MASON!



THE GERMAN SHELL WAS NOT ON TARGET. IT SPENT ITS SAVAGE FORCE AGAINST BRICKS AND MORTAR...

DRIVERS, GET US OFF THE STREETS AND UNDER COVER! TURN INTO THE RUINS!



THE CHURCHILLS ALTERED COURSE, CRUNCHING ASIDE INTO THE WRECKAGE OF ONE OF THE THOROUGHFARE'S BATTERED BUILDINGS...



MASON JOINED THEM IN THE SHELTER OF THE DEBRIS...

THERE'S A JERRY GUN TUCKED AWAY IN THE BIG DEPARTMENT-STORE, SIR. YOU'LL HAVE TO GIVE THE SQUARE A WIDE BERTH, MISTER FARRAN.



LIEUTENANT KONEFF CHIPPED IN BLUNTLY...

IF WE ARE TO RESCUE PETROVSK,  
AND HIS MEN, WE CANNOT GIVE  
HEROES' SQUARE A WIDE BERTH! WE  
MUST CROSS IT TO REACH  
THEM!



FARRAN LOOKED AT KONEFF, GAVE A BRISK NOD THEN SWITCHED HIS  
ATTENTION TO MASON AGAIN...

NO TIME TO  
EXPLAIN, SERGEANT,  
BUT T'S GOT TO BE  
HEROES' SQUARE...

ALL RIGHT, SR,  
JUST GIVE ME A FEW  
MINUTES. I THINK  
CAN STOP THAT GUN  
FROM BREATHING  
DOWN YOUR NECKS...



DAN MASON HEFTED THE SUB-MACHINE-GUN HE HAD GRABBED. HE FELT STRANGELY EXALTED... YET, DEEP DOWN, HE WAS CONSCIOUS OF A LINGERING SENSE OF SHAME, TOO...

WAIT, SERGEANT. SOME OF US HAD BETT GO WITH YOU

ONE MAN'LL RUN LESS RISK OF DRAWING FIRE THAN A PARTY, SIR, BESIDES, I'VE A NASTY TASTE TO WASH OUT OF MY MOUTH FOR SLOPING OFF LIKE I DID. .



HE DISAPPEARED AMID THE RUBBLE. ALONE, HE WORKED HIS WAY ROUND HEROES' SQUARE. HE WAS ALMOST IN POSITION WHEN LUCK DESERTED HIM... HE SLIPPED ON THE TREACHEROUS RUBBLE...





ALERTED, THE GERMAN ARTILLERYMEN DIVERGED BACK FROM THEIR GUN, SMALL ARMS IN THEIR HANDS. A STREAM OF SCHMEISSER BULLETS PECKED AT THE DUST CLOSE TO MASON.



MASON HAD NO CHANCE TO DIVE FOR COVER IN THAT WITHERING HOT SPOT OF CONCENTRATED FIRE...

AAAAH !



DAN'S BODY JERKED AS THE NAZI BULLETS STRUCK HIM. SOMEHOW, HE BROUGHT HIS OWN GUN INTO PLAY, HOSING THE GERMANS WITH A STREAM OF LEAD ..



FROM ACROSS THE SQUARE, FARRAN'S TROOP HEARD THE SERGEANT SHOUTING THAT THE WAY WAS CLEAR. HIS VOICE SOUNDED STRONG ENOUGH, BUT HE COULD HARDLY RAISE A WHISPER WHEN FARRAN FOUND HIM...



FUNNY THE WAY THINGS GO, SIR I'D COUNTED ON BEING TWO THOUSAND MILES FROM HERE BY NOW. AS IT IS, I WILL NEVER LEAVE STALINGRAD... NOT UNDER MY OWN STEAM...



IT WAS CLEAR SERGEANT MASON HAD NOT GOT LONG TO GO, BUT A GHOST OF A SMILE CROSSED HIS FACE . . .



THE SERGEANT SLUMPED. STIFF-BACKED, LIEUTENANT FARRAN WALKED BACK TO THE TANKS . .



THE CHURCHILLS LUMBERED FORWARD AGAIN, TO ENCOUNTER THE FIRE OF ENEMY INFANTRY FROM A BROAD BOULEVARD . .



THE TANKS' DEAS AND SEVENTY-FIVES OPENED UP. THE GREY-CLAD FIGURES IN FRONT OF THEM WILTED UNDER A STORM OF LEAD AND STEEL. BUT—THERE WAS DANGER ABOVE . .





FARRAN'S BULLET DRILLED A WEHRMACHT CORPORAL AS HE WAS ABOUT TO LET FLY WITH A STICK-GRANADE. THERE WERE OTHER NAZIS READY TO THROW...



CLOSE  
ALL HATCHES!  
HURRY! WE'LL  
HAVE GRANADES  
INSIDE IF WE  
DON'T!

THE THREE IRONCLADS RAN THE GAUNTLET OF A DELUGE OF HAND-BOMBS...



WE'LL BE RIGHT AS  
RAIN, SMUGGER, SO LONG  
AS OUR BATTLE-WAGONS  
DON'T SHED ANY  
TRACKS.

KEEP  
YOUR FINGERS  
CROSSED, BOB—  
FOR ALL OF  
US.

THE TRACKS SUFFERED NO DAMAGE. FARTHER ALONG THE BOULEVARD, KARRAN AND HIS PARTY MET THE REMNANTS OF PETROVSKI'S UNIT...



PETROVSKI, EYED THE RESCUERS UNCERTAINLY. IT WAS PLAIN HE HAD LITTLE FAITH IN THEM. HE AGREED TO FARRAN'S PROPOSALS BADDOINGLY.

COVER THE UPPER WINDOWS, GUNNERS, AND SHOOT AT ANY SIGN OF MOVEMENT.



BUT BEFORE LONG, PETROVSKI HAD CAUSE TO REVISE HIS OPINIONS...



MY MEN COULD NEVER HAVE FOUGHT THEIR WAY OUT OF THIS RING IT LOOKS AS IF THE BRITISHERS WILL GET US THROUGH...



BACK AT THE CHURCHILLS' START POINT, KONIEFF TRANSLATED A DRAMING SPEECH MADE BY PETROVSKI.

THE MAJOR WISHES TO EXTEND HIS WARMEST THANKS TO YOU AND YOUR CREWS. HE HOPES THAT ONE DAY IN THE FUTURE, YOU AND HE WILL BE ABLE TO CELEBRATE THE OCCASION TOGETHER.

TELL THE MAJOR IT'S A DATE.



THAT WAS A DATE FARRAN COULD NOT KEEP. STALINGRAD WAS RELIEVED ONLY WHEN RUSSIAN COUNTER-BLOWS AND WINTER'S ICY GRIP COMBINED TO DESTROY THE MORALE OF THE CITY'S INVADERS.

IT IS A WHOLESAL SURRENDER... THE END OF A GERMAN FORMATION THAT WAS ORIGINALLY HALF-A-MILLION STRONG!





BUT FARRAN AND HIS TROOP HAD BEEN RECALLED LONG BEFORE THEN. ONCE AGAIN, THEY WERE IN NORTH AFRICA, WITH THE VICTORY OF ALAMEIN BEHIND THEM—AND ROMMEL'S AFRIKA KORPS BACK-PEDALLING IN FRONT OF THEM...



ONLY ONE OF THE BRITISH DRAGOON TROOP REMAINED IN STALINGRAD WHEN THE RAVAGED CITY WAS RECLAIMED BY ITS RIGHTFUL OWNERS...



DAN MASON RESTED WHERE HE HAD FALLEN...

MAYBE DAN MASON WAS THERE IN SPIRIT, TOO — WATCHING THAT SHIVERING, SHUFFLING, BLEARY-EYED FAMISHED RABBLE...



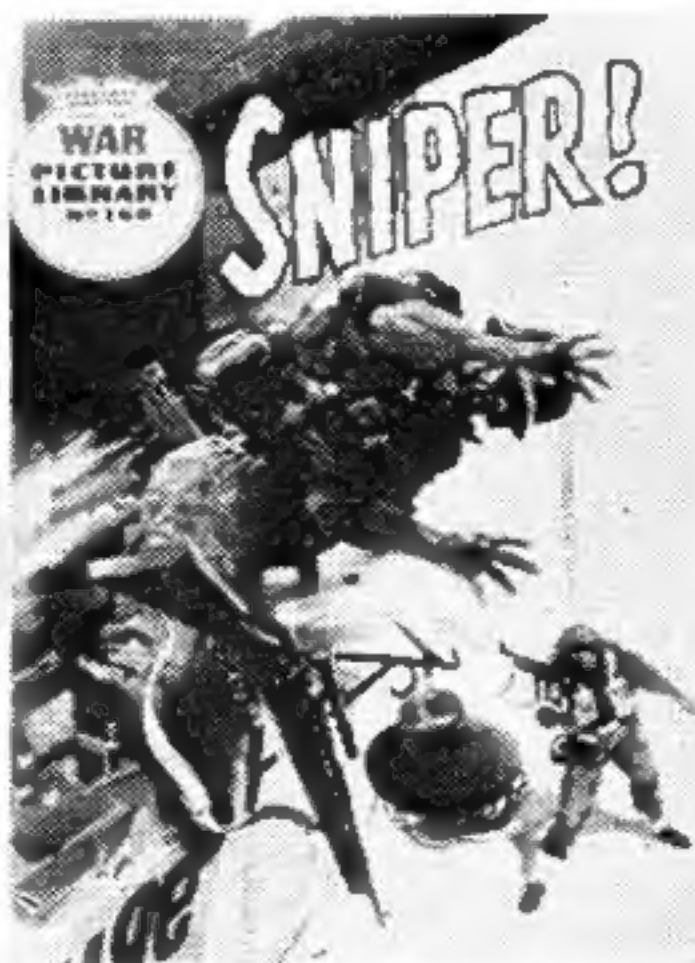
MEN WHO HAD ONCE GOOSE-STEPPED ARROGANTLY WERE NOW A WOEBEGONE VANGUARD ON THE LONE ROAD OF DEFEAT AND DISASTER DOWN WHICH THE NAZIS WERE TO DRAG THE WHOLE GERMAN NATION...

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